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‘Trunk or Treat’ brings spooky fun

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

‘Trunk or Treat’ volunteers passing out bags of candy in Brownell Parking Lot on Saturday, Oct. 31.

From mighty superheroes to brave princesses, the Brownell Parking Lot was filled with Halloween costumes, candy and plenty of spooky decorations as the university welcomed families to its annual “Trunk or Treat” celebration on Saturday, Oct. 31.

University departments, student organizations and athletic teams transformed their vehicles and tables into Halloween-themed displays, creating a festive trail for children to visit and collect candy.

“One little girl was dressed as Princess Tiana. I was bending down to give her candy, and she came up and gave me a hug,” biotechnology major Ny’ela Porter, a junior, said.

Porter volunteered with Orientation, Transition and Family Engagement, where she dressed as an alien and helped bring the group’s space-themed display to life. This was her second year participating in the annual tradition.

The displays featured themes ranging from under the sea to outer space, by giving children plenty of stops to make as they showed off their costumes and filled their candy bags.

Since Halloween fell on a Saturday this year, the celebration ran from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. In previous years, “Trunk or Treat” typically took place at night, but volunteers welcomed the switch to a daytime celebration.

“I liked it better in the morning because the community got to do “Trunk or Treat” in the morning and still go trick-or-treating at night,” Porter said.

The earlier schedule also gave volunteers a chance to participate in the festivities without giving up their own Halloween plans.

“Volunteers are able to do that service in the morning and still get their night to celebrate as well,” Porter said.

Representing the Bronze Leadership Program, healthcare studies major Pelumi Omosowone, a freshman, the celebration was another opportunity to enjoy a tradition she has looked forward to since high school.

“I went to Hillhouse High School, so this is my third ‘Trunk or Treat’ here, but my first as a college student,” Omosowone said.

For her, the celebration is about more than candy and costumes.

“It brings everyone together, and everyone is laughing and having a great time,” Omosowone said.

Omosowone said she hopes that volunteers take this as an opportunity to speak with community members and departments beyond the university like New Haven Police.

“It also allows students to interact with people from outside the community and get to know New Haven better,” Omosowone said.

Psychology major Jerome Lowery, a junior, experienced “Trunk or Treat” for the first time this year.

“I liked seeing people in their costumes and getting into the Halloween spirit,” Lowery said.

Lowery also appreciated the opportunity for students and local families to spend time together.

“I like seeing the community connect with our school,” Lowery said.

With candy-filled bags, creative displays and children showing off their Halloween costumes, “Trunk or Treat” once again gave the university and the New Haven community a reason to come together.

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First-Generation students

By Elena Panora-Jara
Contributor

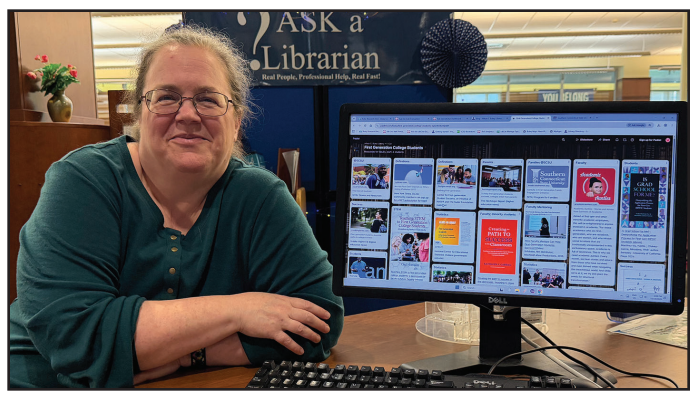

PHOTO | ELENA PANORA-JARA

Distance Education Librarian Rebecca Hedreen sitting at the Research and Information Desk, showing off the “First Generation Special Collection” online exhibit she co-organized.

For first-generation college students, navigating higher education can mean figuring out unfamiliar processes without the guidance of family who have been through it before.

“I’m the oldest sibling, so I’ve always had to be the first to do everything,” elementary education major Olivia Edwards, a freshman, said.

With National First-Generation College Celebration week, taking place from Nov. 2 to Nov. 8, it is important to recognize the first-generation population at the university.

In the university’s common data set for 2025-26, only 276 of the 621 first-generation students who started back in 2019 had graduated with a bachelor’s degree or equivalent by the end of August 2025.

The university kicked the week off by hosting various events throughout the week of Nov. 2.

The Buley Library is doing its part in celebrating the occasion by setting up a book display filled with resources first-generation students can use.

Education Librarian Karla Jones will be selecting books from the library’s collection to build the display on the first floor.

The setup is based on the online first-generation resource exhibit that has been available for about two years.

“This display is for you, about you, about people like you,” Life Sciences and Distance Learning Librarian and co-organizer of the online exhibit Rebecca Hedreen, said.

Built by Hedreen and Acquisitions Librarian Kari Swanson, the “First-Generation Special Collection” online exhibit is a resource page for first-generation students, by bringing different resources into one place.

This way, first-generation students and their families are offered information on navigating college, while university faculty and staff can learn how to support students whose families may not have prior college experience.

Nursing major Rikee Curtis, a senior, recognized the disadvantage first-generation students face.

“I know that I always have a lot of questions that I could ask my mom or dad,” Curtis said. “They can answer them because of the things that they’ve gone through.”

First-generation students have a unique set of academic, financial and emotional challenges compared to those whose parents completed at least a four-year college or university degree, as they have access to guidance and a level of understanding throughout their higher education career.

Though first-generation students like nursing major Aylin Estrada, a sophomore, said a collection like this could help students like her find resources to navigate school life and realize others share similar experiences.

“First-gen students can face a problem; maybe someone in the collection knows how to solve it,” Estrada said. “The community and support found can help each student.”

For Hedreen, the display is more than providing information; she hopes it will show the first-generation community that they are valued at the university.

The goal of the online exhibit and upcoming physical display is to convey a message to the first-generation community on campus: we want you here.

Survivors share stories to raise domestic violence awareness

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor

Survivors of domestic violence shared their personal experiences with students Oct. 28, during an awareness event in the School of Business aimed at educating students about abusive relationships, recognizing warning signs and the importance of seeking support.

The Women in Leadership Academy partnered with First Love Yourself, Inc. to organize the event. The program brought survivors and advocates together to discuss controlling behavior, emotional abuse, personal safety and recovery.

“Although domestic violence can be a difficult and uncomfortable topic to discuss, it’s a conversation that needs to happen,” accounting major Mirza Fahmida, a junior and vice president of WILA, said.

Fahmida said the organization held a similar event with F.L.Y. founder Denisse Luciano last year.

After that program, members decided domestic violence awareness should become an annual event for the academy.

Fahmida said college students are developing independence and entering new relationships, making conversations about boundaries and respect particularly relevant.

Students may overlook troubling behavior or excuse disrespectful comments when they care about someone, Fahmida said.

“Just because certain behaviors become normalized doesn’t mean anyone should have to tolerate them,” Fahmida said. “By bringing these conversations to campus, we’re encouraging students to recognize their worth, establish healthy boundaries, and understand what respect in a relationship should look like.”

During the event, Luciano shared her experience of homelessness at 18 and described a relationship that began with a man offering her food and clothing but became abusive after she moved into his home.

“I wanted to be loved, and I wanted to be safe,” Luciano said. “The man who told me he would keep me safe became the man that I was trying to escape.”

Luciano also described controlling behavior during a later marriage, explaining how emotional abuse can precede physical violence.

Other survivors recounted experiences involving threats, isolation and efforts to leave dangerous relationships.

One speaker described surviving an attack by her former partner in October 2023 after enduring repeated monitoring and threats.

She said her son helped her contact emergency services after she escaped the attack.

The discussion also highlighted how abuse can affect people beyond romantic partners, including children and other family members.

Fahmida said hearing directly from survivors connected the event’s message about domestic violence awareness with empowerment and self-love.

She emphasized that leaving an abusive relationship is not always simple or safe and can require considerable support.

“A common message throughout their stories was the importance of rediscovering their self-worth, rebuilding their confidence, and learning to love themselves again,” Fahmida said.

Fahmida said the organization hopes students will recognize unhealthy situations, support friends or relatives who may be experiencing abuse and understand that help is available.

There were also several on and off campus resources in attendance to highlight reaching out for help.

She also wants conversations about domestic violence to continue beyond a single campus event.

“At the end of the day, if even one person left the event feeling more informed, empowered, or confident enough to seek help for themselves or someone else, then I believe we accomplished something meaningful,” Fahmida said.